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AUTHOR Al-Fadhli, Hussain M.; Smith, James Curtis
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ABSTRACT

Whether there is a relationship between violence-related variables and the motivation for parenthood was studied, and the difference between African Americans and Whites in terms of their motivation for parenthood and in relation to violence related variables and other structural and cultural factors was studied. Data are from the National Opinion Research Center's General Social Survey. The sample consisted of 1,347 White respondents and 179 African American respondents. Several scales were developed to measure some of the dependent and independent variables. Questions relevant to motivation for parenthood and the value of children were taken from the survey. In the black sample, there was a positive linear relationship between the variable "importance of children" and the measure of life satisfaction. Results do not show a correlation between the violence-related variables and the importance of children for either race, except for the violence experience variable (being victimized or having fear of crime) for white respondents, indicating that those who have been through a violent experience are less likely to value children. Sex-role ideology, socioeconomic status, degree of religiosity, and level of life satisfaction are all related to the different measures of the motivation for parenthood and the value of children for both Whites and African Americans. Children are perceived with less appeal by those in lower socioeconomic groups. Within the limitations of the measurement of some of the variables, the data partially provide support for the thesis that the motivation for parenthood is in large part the result of violence-related factors. The constant concern for safety and security among African Americans may affect their motivation for parenthood or the way they value the importance of having children. (Contains 4 tables and 27 references.) (SLD)

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ED 410 332

Assessing the Impact of Violence on Motivation for Parenthood Among Blacks and Whites

Hussain M. Al-Fadhli and James Curtis Smith

Tougaloo College

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World statistics reveal that industrialized societies have higher crime rates than less developed countries. The traditional character of less economically developed societies and their strong family allow local communities to control crime locally. The impact of drastic change in industrialized societies has virtually been an area of interest and concern for many social scientists. Durkheim (1912) a pioneer sociologist, attributed this change to the impact of industrialization, rural/urban migration, urbanization, and the increased level of education and specialization. Durkheim's theory contends that as societies modernize, the traditional institutions such as religion, the clan, and the extended family will be weakened. Extended families break up into nuclear families, fragmented forms, or unattached individuals (Schwartz, 1996; Knapp, 1994; Ritzer, 1992). Anomie - a sense of normlessness- often results and can aggravate a welter of social problems, including unusual levels of crime, anomic suicide, and illegitimate and abandoned children (Schwartz, 1996). As emphasized by Eckersley (1993), the growing crime rates, increasing drug problems, rampant violence, and widespread depressive illness are all signs of western value and the culture's deepening crisis.

The voluminous literature on the prevalence of violence attributed its existence to different structural variables such as poverty, unemployment, mental disorder, family breakdown, peer pressure and a multitude of other scourges of the industrial world in general. However, violence has become particularly a landmark of the American society manifesting itself in social reality as well as the psyches of individuals. Statistics gathered by the Federal Bureau of Investigation show that crime rates have risen in recent decades, despite increases in government spending on anticrime programs. During the 1980s, for example, the police recorded some 8 million serious crimes annually, documenting a 23 percent increase in violent crime

across the decade (U. S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1991). These increasing crime rates, the daily crime news, and the violence-oriented entertainment industry have worked collectively to reinforce the harsh reality of a culture that either condones or promotes some level of violence. Such reality would consequently force many to meticulously rethink the importance of permanent marriage and parenthood.

In recent years a considerable body of research has focused on different factors that determine the motivations for parenthood, value of children, and fertility. The concern stems from the fact that industrial societies in general and the United States in particular have been experiencing a drastic shift in their traditional values to a more modern trend where a decline in the pronatalist values has become evident. Michaels (1988) argued that "the decline in pronatalist values has led to a situation in which those who do not want to have children can make this choice without the fear of extreme social criticism or ostracism (p. 23)." Motivation for parenthood or the lack of it has been widely explained on the bases of the rational choice model by many researchers (Nye, 1979; Seccombe, 1991; Yamaguchi & Ferguson, 1995). The assumption is that individuals are rational beings and their behavior reflects decisions evaluated on the basis of costs and benefits (Seccombe, 1991). As a matter of fact, the cultural developments in gender-role ideology, the growing leniency toward abortion, and the use of contraceptive and medical technology have greatly contributed to the choice of limited number of children or forgoing parenthood altogether.

Studies generally link motivation for parenthood to psychological as well as sociodemographic factors that are mostly congruent with the rational choice model. Psychological factors include viewing children as a source of love and affection (Cohen, 1985;

Neal, Groat, & Wicks, 1989); a source of maintaining strong marital and family ties (Michaels, 1988; Neal et al, 1989); and a source of personal fulfillment and a sense of immortality (Veevers, 1973; Williams, 1987; Michaels, 1988). Lack of motivation for having children may be attributed to many other psychological and individual factors such as seeing children as a source of stress and change in life-style (Michaels, 1988; Neal et al, 1989); increased social responsibilities (Knox & Schacht, 1994); worry and trouble (Affonso & Mayberry, 1989; Brailey, 1989); and economic burden (Seccombe, 1991). In addition, researchers have noted a negative association between feminist sympathies and motivation for parenthood (Gerson, 1984;1986; MacDermid, Houston, & McHale, 1990; Seccombe, 1991).

Sociodemographic factors such as race, level of education, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, and type of residence also play a major role in determining the value of children and fertility rate. Social research reports that African Americans value children more than Whites (Hoffman & Manis, 1979; Thompson, 1980; Jacobsen & Bigner, 1991); educated individuals have lower desire for having children than less educated ones (Jain, 1981; Marini, 1984), couples who choose to be child free are less likely than couples with children to adhere to any set of religious beliefs (Knox & Schacht, 1994); employed and educated women who occupy a middle class occupation are less likely to value children (White & Kim, 1987; Seccombe, 1991); and individuals residing in rural areas are more likely to place greater value on children than urbanites (Jacobsen & Bigner, 1991).

One major, unresolved problem with the previous body of research is that it has not systematically investigated the effect of other structural variables (i.e., personal violence exposure and victimization, weapon ownership, general perceptions toward the use of violence)

on motivation for parenthood and value of children. Heretofore, researchers have been content with merely examining the relationships between selected sociodemographic and psychological variables and motivation for parenthood but have neglected the impact of some other structural variables as violence and its correlates.

This research attempts to explore whether there is a relationship between the prevalence of violence and the deterioration of the basic values of the American family and most importantly, the motivation for parenthood.

The major focus of this study is twofold: 1) to assess the relationship between violence-related variables and the motivation for parenthood; and 2) to examine the difference between African-Americans and Whites in terms of their motivation for parenthood in relation to the violence-related variables and other structural and cultural factors (e. g., the sociodemographic; sex-role ideology; religiosity; life-satisfaction).

Method

Participants

Data for the research is taken from the National Opinion Research Center's General Social Survey (GSS-1993). The GSS is conducted regularly by the NORC in Chicago with financial support from the National Science Foundation and private sources. The purpose of the of the GSS program is to provide the nation's social students with accurate data on the U. S. adult population for analysis. The first survey was conducted in 1972, and has continued more or less annually since then (Davis & Smith, 1992). The sample for this study consisted of 1,606 cases. The analysis is restricted to adult (18 years and above) African-American respondents (179 cases) and white respondents (1,347 cases).

Instruments

Several scales were developed to measure some of the dependent and independent variables in the study such as anomie scale, life-satisfaction scale, sex-role ideology scale, violent attitudes scale, defensive attitudes scale, violence experience scale, and weapon ownership scale.

Scales related to motivation for parenthood and value of children as those suggested by Rabin (1965) or Gerson (1983) are not precisely included in the GSS, 1993 survey. Instead, other relevant questions have been used to achieve this end. Three different measures were utilized to measure the different dimensions of the dependent variable, value of children and motivation for parenthood. First, the survey included a question on the extent to which it is important to the respondent to have children. Responses range from (1) one of the most important to (5) not at all important. The second dimension is reporting the respondent's actual number of children. The third dimension is a scale of two items on the level of anomie. Respondents were asked to report their extent of agreement with the following two statements: 1) it is not fair to bring a child into world; 2) the lot of the average man is getting worse. The internal consistency of the two items based on Cronbach's reliability coefficient is (α = .532). Despite the fact that anomie is itself multidimensional, we chose these two items in congruence with the thrust of the study.

The independent variables employed in this study are life satisfaction, religiosity, sex-role, level of education, income, and the violence-related variables. Life satisfaction was measured by a construct of five items. Respondents were asked "How much satisfaction do they get from their family, friendship, hobbies, health, and residencies?" Items are coded so that

lower number (1) "Very great deal" indicates higher level of satisfaction where higher number (7) "Little" indicates lower level of satisfaction. The reliability coefficient of the scale is (α = .686). Religiosity is measured by the question "How often does the respondent pray?" Responses range from (1) "Several times a day" to (6) "Never". Sex-role scale consists of four items (α = .740). These items are responses to such statements as: "Better for man to work, woman to tend the home"; "Wife should help husband's career first"; "Women take care of home not country"; "Women not suited for politics". Responses coded on the Likert scale range from (1) "Strongly agree" to (4) "Strongly disagree". Two other sociodemographic variables are included; namely, level of education, measured by the highest year of school completed, and the total family income. Responses were descended from low to high and coded accordingly.

The violence-related variables are classified into four: violent attitudes scale, defensive attitudes scale, violence experience, and weapon ownership. The violent/defensive-attitude scales were borrowed from the work of Dixon and Lizotte (1987). The violent-attitudes scale was measured into four items (α = .521). The items inquired whether the respondent would approve or disapprove the use of violence in the following events: 1) a man punching an adult male stranger if the adult male stranger was in a protest march showing opposition to the other man's view; 2) a man punching an adult male stranger if the adult stranger was drunk and bumped into the man and his wife on the street; 3) a policeman striking an adult male citizen if the male citizen had said vulgar and obscene things to the policeman; 4) a policeman striking an adult male citizen if the male citizen was being questioned as a suspect in a murder case. Likewise, the defensive-attitude scale was constructed from three items (α = .574) that deal with the extent to which respondents would approve or disapprove the use of violence for defensive

reasons. Statements were delineated as the following: 1) a man punching an adult male stranger if the adult stranger was beating a woman and the man saw it; 2) a man punching an adult male stranger if the adult male stranger had hit the man's child after the child accidently damaged the stranger's car; 3) a man punching an adult male stranger if the adult male stranger had broken into the man's house. Responses were coded (0) approve and (1) disapprove. Violence experience was operationalized into two dimensions: victimization and fear of crime. Victimization was measured by asking respondents "Have you ever been bunched or beaten by another person?." Fear of crime was measured by the extent to which the respondent would be afraid to walk at night in the neighborhood. Responses were coded (0) yes and (1) no. Additionally, two questions were used to measure weapon ownership (α = .838). Responses also were coded (0) yes and (1) no.

Procedure

As mentioned earlier, this study is based on the utilization of the General Social Survey administered in 1993 (GSS-93), a secondary data that has been conducted and sponsored by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC).

Results

The standard *t* test of statistical significance was used (as shown in table 1) to compare Blacks and Whites in each of the utilized variables. A *P* value of .01 or less indicated a statistically significant difference between the two races. The results of the test show no statistical significance between the means of Whites and Blacks in terms of their outlook on the importance of children. However, there is a significant difference in their anomic feelings and in the number of children.

Table 1 is right here

Two of the four violence-related variables, namely, the defensive attitudes and weapon ownership were statistically significant. With a slight difference in scores, white respondents tend to approve violence for defensive reasons more than black respondents. Additionally, whites tend to own guns more than blacks. Results show no statistical difference between African-Americans and Whites in terms of their sex-role ideology. With respect to the level of life satisfaction and degree of religiosity, African-Americans are less satisfied but more religious compared to white respondents. This may be explained by the significant difference between the two races in terms of their income and level of education. African-Americans, as shown in table 1, are more likely to be less educated and with lower income than whites.

Tables 2 and 3 present the zero-order correlation coefficients among all variables included in the study for both blacks and whites respectively. The results of the analysis provided partial support for the proposition that motivation for parenthood is associated with violence-related variables as well as other factors.

Inspection of the black sample correlation coefficients shows a positive linear relationship between the variable "importance of children" and the measure of life satisfaction ($r = .296$, $p < .01$)and income ($r = -.165$, $p < .05$). This implies that the higher the income and the level of life satisfaction of black respondents, the higher the value they place on children.

Insert table 2 about here

Whites, on the other hand, show similar results on both variables, family income (r = - .120, p < .01) and social satisfaction (r = .126, p < .01) besides the religiosity measure (r = .173, p < .01).

Insert table 3 about here

Results in both tables 2 and 3 do not show a correlation between the violence-related variables and the importance of children for both races except the violence experience variable (e. g., being victimized or having fear of crime) in the white sample (r = - .153, p < .01). This correlation indicates that white respondents who had been through a violent experience or fear of crime are likely to devalue children.

The number of children among black respondents is statistically significant in relation with the level of religiosity (r = - .185, p < .05), sex-role ideology (r = - .205, p < .05), level of education (r = - .237, p < .01), and income (r = - .168, p < .05). This indicates that religious black respondents with lower level of education and income and who hold traditional sex-role ideology have more children than individuals in higher socioeconomic status. Likewise, white respondents with similar characteristics have comparable results. Results reveal a negative association between weapon ownership and the number of children in the black sample only. Black respondents who have more children would have more tendency to own weapons than those with

fewer children ($r = -.211$, $p < .05$).

The status of anomie is also significantly related to different variables in both races. For black respondents, anomie is associated with violence experience ($r = .259$, $p < .05$), level of education ($r = .233$, , $p < .05$), and defensive attitudes ($r = -.329$, $p < .05$). The anomic feelings among white respondents are significantly associated with a host number of variables such as life satisfaction ($r = -.209$, $p < .01$), sex-role ideology ($r = .161$, $p < .01$), level of education ($r = .271$, $p < .01$), income ($r = .166$, $p < .01$), and violent attitudes ($r = .114$, $p < .05$).

To further examine the impact of the violence-related variables on the motivation for parenthood variables, regression analysis has been used. Three separate regression models (total sample, black sample, white sample) were utilized to analyze the three dependent variables, namely, importance of children, number of children, and anomie. Results reveal that anomie was the most important variables in the regression model.

As shown in table 4, the four violence-related variables explained about 17% ($R^2 = .167$) of the variation in the state of anomie in black sample. Defensive attitudes ($\beta = -.257$, $p < .05$) and weapon ownership ($\beta = .237$, $p < .05$) were the most significant predictors of this dependent variable. In contrast, the violence-related variables explained only 3% ($R^2 = .033$) of the total variation in anomie among white respondents (violent attitudes $\beta = .118$, $p < .10$; weapon ownership $\beta = .122$, $p < .10$).

Insert table 4 about here

Additionally, weapon ownership was the only significant predictor in determining the number of children in the black sample (β= -.241, $p < .10$). Again this variable explained 9% (R^2= .091) of the total variation in fertility (number of children), the second highest explanatory proportion of this variable in the black sample. Violence experience was statistically significant in explaining the "importance of children" variable among white respondents only (β=-.122, $p <$ .10).

Discussion

As noted earlier, the nature of this study is exploratory. We propose that the growing complexity of the industrialized societies, and the U. S. in particular, has gradually contributed to the erosion of the basic family value systems. The lack of motivation for parenthood has been explained by different socioeconomic as well as psychological factors. Consistent with the previous research (Gerson, 1984; 1986; MacDermid et al., 1990; Seccombe, 1991; White & Kim, 1987; Knox & Schacht, 1994) the results of this study found that sex-role ideology, socioeconomic status, degree of religiosity, and the level of life satisfaction are all invariably related to the different measures of the motivation for parenthood and the value of children for both Whites and African Americans. Children are perceived with less appeal by respondents who came from a lower socioeconomic background. However, level of satisfaction in family and social life coupled with certain degree of religiosity would make a difference in terms of motivation for parenthood. Feminist attitudes also play a major role in determining either the number of children (fertility) or the "importance of children". Feminist attitudes have a stronger impact among Whites than African Americans. Again, these conclusions are in congruence with the rational choice model discussed in the literature review. Interestingly enough, despite the

fact that African Americans have a higher level of anomie and alienation, they tend to desire having more children than do whites. Such a result is supported by the previous scientific research (Hoffman & Manis, 1978; Jacobsen & Bigner, 1991).

We contend that violence is an outcome of the complexity of the post industrial societies. Therefore, it could be looked upon as an effect as well as a cause. In other words, the prevalence of crime and the growing fear of crime would negatively contribute to the deterioration of the value system of the society and particularly the value of children and the motivation for parenthood. Despite the abstractness of this reasoning, this research attempts to establish this interconnectedness between the reality of violence and the lack of motivation for parenthood.

With the limitations of the measurement of some of the variables, the data partially provide substantial support for the thesis that the motivation for parenthood (e.g., importance of children, number of children, anomie) are in large part the result of violence-related factors. For example, defensive attitudes (the use of violence for defensive measures) and weapon ownership among African American respondents are seen to exhibit higher effect on the level of anomie or the general outlook of having children. Additionally, weapon ownership is also a significant predictor of fertility (number of children) among African Americans only. One possible explanation for this is that African Americans live in communities that require some safety measures. The constant concern for safety and security among African Americans would definitely affect their motivation for parenthood or the way they weigh the importance of having children in such a violent atmosphere.

Although the measure of violence experience was not a significant predictor in the black sample, white respondents, in contrast, show a sort of sensitivity to such unpleasant experience

which in turn affects their attitudes and judgement towards the value of children.

In summary, motivation for parenthood in general is a product of numerous sociodemographic and psychological factors, but most importantly the study has shed some light on the explanatory contribution of the violence-related variables to such an important issue.

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Table 1

T- Test Analysis of all Variables for Blacks and Whites

	Blacks (n=179)		Whites (n=1347)			
Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	p
1. Imp. of Children	2.55	1.14	2.38	1.19	-1.87	.06
2. No. of Children	2.37	2.19	1.79	1.58	-4.37	.001
3. Anomie	2.43	.64	2.96	.77	7.19	.001
4. Violent Attit.	7.79	.50	7.80	.55	.05	.958
5.Defense. Attit.	3.91	.95	3.62	.86	-3.34	.001
6. Violent Exper.	3.25	.57	3.27	.66	.042	.822
7. Weapon Own.	3.58	.77	3.26	.91	-3.78	.001
8. Life Satis.	14.26	4.84	12.36	4.75	-3.94	.001

Table 1 continues

Table 1 (continued)

T- Test Analysis of all Variables for Blacks and Whites

Variables	Blacks (n=179) Mean	Blacks (n=179) Std. Dev.	Whites (n=1347) Mean	Whites (n=1347) Std. Dev.	t	p
9. Pray	2.14	1.28	2.80	1.55	4.37	.001
10. Sex role	7.05	1.18	7.13	1.22	.57	.567
11. Education	12.06	3.08	13.18	2.94	4.78	.001
12. Income	9.26	3.46	10.65	2.47	6.58	.001

Table 2

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients for all Variables for Blacks (n=179)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. IMP	-											
2. CHD	-.126	-										
3. ANM	-.078	.053	-									
4. VIL	.082	.012	.138	-								
5. DEF	-.034	.205*	-.329*	-.168	-							
6. VEX	-.015	.021	.259*	.017	-.218	-						
7. WEP	.063	-.211*	-.043	.330*	-.069	-.165	-					
8. SAT	.296**	.039	-.010	-.009	-.039	.041	-.083	-				
9. PRY	.176	-.185*	.186	.072	-.345*	.001	.007	.113	-			
10. SRL	.068	-.205*	.081	.123	-.084	.002	.196	-.186	.031	-		
11.EDU	-.092	-.237**	.233*	.293**	.009	.019	.057	-.160	.078	.304**	-	
12.INC	-.165*	-.168*	.169	.283**	-.051	.006	-.133	-.280**	.005	.157	.503**	-
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

*

* $P < .01$

* $P < .05$

Variables legend:

IMP: Importance of having children to respondents.

CHD: number of children.

Table 2 continues

Table 2 (continued)

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients for all Variables for Blacks (n=179)

ANM: Anomie Scale.

VIL: Violence Attitudes Scale.

DEF: Defensive scale

VEX: Violence Experience Scale.

WEP: Weapon Ownership Scale.

SAT: Social Satisfaction Scale.

PRY: How Often Does Respondent Pray?

SRL: Sex Role Scale.

EDU: Highest Year of School Completed.

INC: Total Family Income.

Table 3

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients for all Variables for Whites (n=1347)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. IMP	-											
2. CHD	-.284**	-										
3. ANM	-.109**	-.018	-									
4. VIL	-.012	-.066	.114*	-								
5. DEF	.042	.035	.042	.069	-							
6. VEX	-.153**	.035	.064	-.043	.008	-						
7. WEP	-.020	-.013	.061	.051	.227**	-.101*	-					
8. SAT	.126**	-.068*	-.209**	.010	-.026	-.169**	.023	-				
9. PRY	.173**	-.140**	-.039	.092	-.022	.002	-.022	.088	-			
10. SRL	.027	-.133**	.161**	.222**	-.061	.001	.067	-.072	.246**	-		
11.EDU	-.037	-.210**	.271**	.083*	-.055	-.035	.120**	-.143**	.112**	.274**	-	
12.INC	-.120**	-.014	.166**	.071*	-.099**	.065	-.115**	-.254**	.105**	.191**	.348**	-
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

** $P < .01$

* $P < .05$

Variables legend:

IMP: Importance of having children to respondents.

CHD: number of children.

ANM: Anomie Scale.

Table 3 continues

Table 3 (continued)

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients for all Variables for Whites (n=1347)

VIL: Violence Attitudes Scale

DEF: Defensive scale

VEX: Violence Experience Scale.

WEP: Weapon Ownership Scale.

SAT: Social Satisfaction Scale.

PRY: How Often Does Respondent Pray?

SRL: Sex Role Scale.

EDU: Highest Year of School Completed.

INC: Total Family Income.

Table 4

Multiple Regression Analysis of Anomie Regressed on Violence-Related Variables

	Anomie		
	Pooled	Blacks	Whites
	β	β	β
Predictors	(s.e.)	(s.e.)	(s.e.)
Viol. Attitudes	.100**	-.011	.118**
	(.064)	(.130)	(.079)
Defens. Attit.	.058	-.257*	-.001
	(.040)	(.074)	(.046)
Viol. Exper.	.083*	.154	.071
	(.059)	(.138)	(.064)
Weapon Own.	.087*	.237*	.122**
	(.043)	(.107)	(.047)
R^2	.024	.167	.033

Note: Independent Variables for Pooled Sample (n=1606), and separably for Blacks (n=179), and Whites (n=1347).

** P < .05

* P < .10

Table 4 continues

Table 4 (continued)

Multiple Regression Analysis of Anomie Regressed on Violence-Related Variables

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Variables Legend:

Viol. Attit.:	Violent Attitudes Scale.
Defens. Attit.:	Defensive Attitudes Scale.
Viol. Exper.:	Violence Experience Scale.
Weapon Own.:	Weapon Ownership scale.